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ACTION EAP-00

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| INFO | LOG-00 | NP-00 | ACQ-00 | CIAE-00 | DODE-00 | DOEE-00 | WHA-00 |
| | SRPP-00 | DS-00 | EB-00 | FBIE-00 | UTED-00 | VC-00 | H-01 |
| | TEDE-00 | INR-00 | LAB-00 | L-00 | VCE-00 | AC-01 | NSAE-00 |
| | NSCE-00 | OMB-01 | OPIC-01 | PA-00 | PM-00 | PRS-00 | ACE-00 |
| | P-00 | SP-00 | SS-00 | TEST-00 | TRSE-00 | T-00 | USIE-00 |
| | PMB-00 | DSCC-00 | DRL-02 | G-00 | NFAT-00 | SAS-00 | SWCI-00 |
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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2362
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000702

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [CB](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: MFA RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT HIGHLANDERS IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAMESE WORKERS IN AMERICAN SAMOA

REF: HANOI 00598

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1. SUMMARY: AMERICAS DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR ASKED AMBASSADOR TO MEET AFTERNOON OF MARCH 26 TO RAISE VIETNAMESE CONCERNS ABOUT A GROUP OF HIGHLANDERS WHO HAVE ILLEGALLY CROSSED THE BORDER INTO CAMBODIA AND TO REITERATE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES TO REMOVE ALL VIETNAMESE WORKERS FROM AMERICAN SAMOA. AMBASSADOR PROMISED TO RELAY VIETNAMESE CONCERNS TO THE DEPARTMENT AND ALSO RAISED U.S. REQUESTS FOR OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT CENTRAL HIGHLAND AREAS WHICH HAD BEEN THE SITE OF JANUARY/FEBRUARY DISTURBANCES. ON THE LATTER POINT, AMERICAS DIRECTOR SAID HE BELIEVED IT WAS "ONLY A MATTER OF TIME" BEFORE THIS WOULD OCCUR. END SUMMARY

2. AMERICAS DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR NGUYEN MANH HUNG ASKED AMBASSADOR TO COME TO MFA AFTERNOON OF MARCH 26 AND RAISED TWO ISSUES WHICH HE SAID HAVE BECOME MORE COMPLICATED RECENTLY BECAUSE OF USG ACTIONS. HUNG BEGAN BY RAISING THE CASE OF A GROUP OF CENTRAL HIGHLANDS RESIDENTS WHO HAD ILLEGALLY CROSSED THE BORDER INTO CAMBODIA. HE SAID THESE INDIVIDUALS HAD BEEN DETAINED BY CAMBODIAN AUTHORITIES AND THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE NOW DISCUSSING THEIR RETURN TO VIETNAM. ACCORDING TO HUNG, THE VIETNAMESE EFFORTS WERE BEING COMPLICATED BY THE INTERVENTION OF "MEMBERS OF THE U.S. EMBASSY DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE IN PHNOM PENH" WHICH WAS URGING THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT NOT TO RETURN THESE VIETNAMESE CITIZENS TO VIETNAM. HUNG STRESSED THAT VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA HAVE A WRITTEN AGREEMENT COVERING ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSERS AND THAT THIS AGREEMENT SHOULD GOVERN HOW THIS CASE WAS HANDLED. HE ASKED THE AMBASSADOR TO RELAY HANOI'S REQUEST THAT U.S. EMBASSY PHNOM PENH OFFICIALS STOP THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THIS BILATERAL MATTER.

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3. SEEKING CLARIFICATION OF WHO MIGHT BE INVOLVED, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED IF THE BORDER CROSSERS WERE IN SOME WAY FLEEING FROM THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES. HUNG CONCURRED THAT THE INDIVIDUALS IN QUESTION HAD COME FROM THE BORDER PROVINCES WHERE THE DISTURBANCES HAD OCCURRED AND IMPLIED THE INDIVIDUALS WERE IN FACT BEING SOUGHT FOR POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT IN THOSE DISTURBANCES. AMBASSADOR SAID WE WERE UNAWARE OF ANY REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES BY EMBASSY PHNOM PENH PERSONNEL AND AGREED TO PASS THIS MESSAGE BACK TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE TO REFLECT VIETNAM'S CONCERN. AMBASSADOR AND DCM IMPLIED THAT THE CROSSING OF THE BORDER MIGHT, HOWEVER, INVOLVE MORE CONCERNS THAN JUST THE BILATERAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA.

4. HUNG NEXT TURNED TO GVN CONCERNS ABOUT THE STATUS OF VIETNAMESE WORKERS IN AMERICAN SAMOA. HE SAID HE'D JUST LEARNED THAT ABOUT 100 OF THESE WORKERS HAD NOW REPORTEDLY GONE TO HAWAII -- PURPORTEDLY CONNECTED TO ONGOING

INVESTIGATIONS OF THE NATURE OF THE CONTRACT ACTIVITIES IN THIS CASE. HUNG SAID THIS TRULY COMPLICATED VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO BRING ALL OF THESE WORKERS BACK HOME. HE SAID THE GVN HAD COMMITTED TO BRING ALL THESE PEOPLE HOME AND HAD AGREED TO PAY THE COSTS WHEN THEY DISCOVERED NEITHER THE WORKERS NOR THE COMPANIES INVOLVED COULD DO SO. VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES, HE SAID, UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR INVESTIGATION OF POSSIBLE WRONGDOING BUT HOPED THIS COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN A QUICK MANNER EITHER IN AMERICAN SAMOA OR BY TAKING DEPOSITIONS FROM THE WORKERS. HE SAID HE SAW NO REAL NEED FOR THESE PEOPLE TO HAVE TO GO TO HAWAII BECAUSE IT INCREASED "EXPECTATIONS" OF A POSSIBLE LONGER

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STAY IN THE U.S.

15. AMBASSADOR SAID HE REMAINED CONCERNED ABOUT THE LONG DELAY THAT HAD OCCURRED BETWEEN THE FIRST REPORTED DISPUTES IN AMERICAN SAMOA AND THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO BRING THE WORKERS BACK TO VIETNAM. THE SITUATION NOW WAS COMPLICATED BECAUSE A LOT OF DIFFERENT LEGAL ISSUES WERE BEING RAISED, INCLUDING BY PEOPLE WHO DID NOT NECESSARILY FAVOR IMPROVEMENT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND VIETNAM. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO PUBLICIZE THE PROBLEMS AND DISCREDIT VIETNAM ON LARGER GROUNDS. HE URGED THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES TO TAKE PROMPT ACTION TO CARRY OUT THE RETURN OF THE VIETNAMESE WORKERS. NOTING HE WAS UNAWARE OF THE REPORT OF 100 WORKERS BEING TRANSFERRED TO HAWAII, AMBASSADOR SAID THIS WAS LIKELY THE RESULT OF A REQUEST FOR A MORE DETAILED INVESTIGATION BY AMERICAN SAMOA AUTHORITIES WHICH HAS NOW PUT THE CASE IN THE HANDS OF THE FBI AND THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE. HE SAID HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANY SPECIFIC INS RULING ON THE WORKERS STATUS THAT MIGHT APPLY TO THEIR GOING TO HAWAII OR TO FURTHER STAYS IN THE U.S.

16. DCM ASKED HUNG IF ONLY VIETNAMESE COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES HAD BEEN PRESENT IN AMERICAN SAMOA TO TALK WITH THE WORKERS ABOUT RETURNING HOME. AMBASSADOR NOTED THE TWO COMPANIES INVOLVED BELONG TO MINISTRIES AND THUS PERHAPS THOUGHT THEY WERE INDEED REPRESENTING THE GOVERNMENT'S

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CONCERNS. DCM SUGGESTED IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO HAVE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO DID NOT REPRESENT THE COMPANIES RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE PROBLEMS BE PRESENT TO HELP THE WORKERS TO RETURN. AMBASSADOR REITERATED EARLIER RECOMMENDATIONS THAT VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES THINK ABOUT SENDING A BOAT OR PLANE TO PICK UP THE REMAINING WORKERS, ASSUMING THE GOVERNMENT COULD PREVAIL UPON THEM THAT IT WAS BEST TO RETURN. HUNG ACKNOWLEDGED THIS WAS VIETNAM'S GOAL BUT SAID VIETNAM "COULD NOT FORCE THESE PEOPLE TO RETURN AGAINST THEIR WILL."

17. HUNG CLAIMED "TOO MANY PEOPLE" WERE ADVISING THE VIETNAMESE WORKERS THEY HAD A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO STAY PERMANENTLY IN THE U.S. THIS, HE SAID, WAS CONFUSING THE WORKERS. HE URGED THE U.S. TO TAKE A DEFINITIVE STANCE ON THIS ISSUE WHICH WOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THERE WAS NO HOPE FOR RESIDENCE IN THE U.S. HUNG ALSO SAID HE HAD RECEIVED THE REPORT OF A MEETING BETWEEN BCLTV DIRECTOR SILVER AND AMBASSADOR BANG IN WHICH SILVER PURPORTEDLY MENTIONED THAT NUMBER IN OR ENROUTE HONOLULU. HUNG TOOK NOTE OF THE SUGGESTION ABOUT "OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS" BEING INVOLVED AND SAID THE VIETNAMESE EMBASSY HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR COORDINATING OFFICIAL ACTIONS AND HE WAS SURE AMBASSADOR BANG HAD BEEN IN FREQUENT CONTACT WITH AMERICAN SAMOA OFFICIALS.

18. AMBASSADOR REITERATED USG REQUEST TO VISIT THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS NOW THAT THE SITUATION HAD CALMED AND THE PRESS HAD ALREADY VISITED. HE CALLED ATTENTION TO THE DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT OF MARCH 23 AND EARLIER U.S. REQUESTS TO VISIT. HE SAID THIS WAS THE ONLY TIME HE HAD

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BEEN REFUSED PERMISSION TO TRAVEL AND THAT HE BELIEVED IT WAS TIME TO LET DIPLOMATS RETURN TO THE POLICY OF OPEN TRAVEL IN COUNTRY. THE AMBASSADOR SAID IF THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES PREFERRED TO HAVE VISITS BY OTHER THAN AMBASSADORS HE WAS PREPARED TO HAVE EMBASSY OR CONGEN HCMC PERSONNEL TAKE THE FIRST TRIPS. BUT, HE SAID, THE TIME WAS NOW RIPE FOR THIS TO TAKE PLACE. HUNG SAID HE WOULD AGAIN CONVEY THE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST TO TRAVEL TO THE REGION. HE WAS AWARE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST IN FEBRUARY AS WELL AS DCM'S REQUEST LAST WEEK. HE SAID HE FELT IT WAS SIMPLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THIS WOULD OCCUR BUT HE DID NOT INDICATE HE FELT THAT OUR REQUEST WOULD GET A FAVORABLE ANSWER IMMEDIATELY. (NOTE: EMBASSY AND CONGEN PERSONNEL HAVE ALREADY MADE APPLICATION TO TRAVEL TO THE AFFECTED REGIONS AND ARE AWAITING FORMAL RESPONSE FROM THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES. END NOTE)

19. COMMENT: VIETNAMESE HAVE LAID THE GROUND WORK TO BLAME THE USG IF ANY OF THE HIGHLAND RESIDENTS OF VIETNAM WHO ARE CURRENTLY IN CAMBODIA SOMEHOW DO NOT MAKE IT BACK TO VIETNAM. IF THERE IS A QUESTION ABOUT THE STATUS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR SOME FORM OF CONSIDERATION AS REFUGEES, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO GET UN OR OTHER APOLITICAL PERSONNEL INTO THE MIX RIGHT AWAY. FOLLOWING THE MEETING, AMBASSADOR DISCOVERED E-MAILED WIRE SERVICE REPORTS QUOTING CAMBODIAN PM HUN SEN AS SAYING ALL OF THE 24 DETAINED VIETNAMESE WOULD BE RETURNED TO VIETNAM. HUN SEN IDENTIFIED THESE INDIVIDUALS AS 'REBELS OR CRIMINALS' AND SAID CAMBODIA HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SEND THEM BACK TO THEIR COUNTRY. HUNG WAS CERTAINLY NOT AWARE OF THESE REPORTS WHEN HE CALLED THE AMBASSADOR TO COME IN. BUT
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HE HAS CLEARLY PUT DOWN A MARKER TO SUGGEST ANY CHANGE IN HUN SEN'S POLICY WILL RESULT IN THE U.S. BEING IDENTIFIED AS THE CULPRIT.

110. ON AMERICAN SAMOA WORKER ISSUES, WE'D APPRECIATE CLARIFICATION WHETHER 100 INDIVIDUALS HAVE ALREADY BEEN REMOVED TO HAWAII. IF NOT, WE URGE THAT USG AGENCIES CONDUCT WHATEVER INVESTIGATIONS ARE NECESSARY IN AMERICAN SAMOA WITHOUT TAKING THESE INDIVIDUALS TO THE U.S. FAILURE TO SO RAISES THE RISK NONE OF THE OTHER WORKERS WILL AGREE TO LEAVE AMERICAN SAMOA. IT ALSO SETS A PRECEDENT FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE EFFORTS TO CREATE "CONDITIONS OF WORK" WHICH WILL ENABLE UNSCRUPULOUS INDIVIDUALS TO "TRAFFIC" ILLEGAL EMIGRANTS TO THE U.S. UNDER THE GUISE OF HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS. END COMMENT

PETERSON

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